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Recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In an ever more interdependent world, a coherent and strong United Nations is needed to meet an immense set of global challenges and a wide diversity of needs. The United Nations has a key role in ensuring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals, enabling countries to lead their development processes and helping to address such global challenges as disease, conflict and the environment, as well as to promote the realization of all rights. The United Nations must be flexible and coherent enough to respond to the operational and policy needs of developing countries, States experiencing conflict, stable low-income countries, emerging economies and developed countries. It should advocate global standards and norms and, in each country, should be focused on delivering results in line with country needs.

2. However, in the face of the preceding challenges, the United Nations is not optimally configured. The Organization urgently needs more coherence and synergy so it can perform as one and be more than the sum of its parts. It should utilize its unique universality, neutrality and capacity to operate in the security, development and humanitarian spheres. It should more successfully perform its roles of convener, standard-setter, advocate, expert, monitor, coordinator and manager of programmes. It should respond to the diverse needs of countries and perform as one at the country level, and have the governance, management and funding practices in place to support those efforts.

3. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment (A/61/583), "Delivering as one", present an

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important opportunity to address those issues in a comprehensive and consistent manner, to ensure that the Organization can respond to the global challenges of the twenty-first century and play a full and effective role at the heart of the multilateral system.

4. Having reviewed and assessed the recommendations put forward by the High-Level Panel, and in the light of the counsel provided by my predecessor, who commissioned the Panel's work, and with the benefit of having engaged in a range of informal consultations on different aspects of the Panel's report, I am pleased to signal my broad support for the principle of a stronger, more coherent United Nations and for the recommendations contained in the report.

5. The Panel's report puts forward a vision of significantly enhanced United Nations system-wide coherence, which I perceive to be very much in line with the demands and objectives of Member States and the concerns they have and continue to voice. That vision is predicated on overcoming fragmentation and bringing together the system's many assets in order to "deliver as one" at all levels, but particularly at the country level, in line with the principle of country ownership. I believe that this is vital, and as I was quoted as saying in the report of the Panel, "the true measure of the success for the United Nations is not how much we promise but how much we deliver for those who need us most".

6. The Panel's vision also gives due prominence to the need for the United Nations system to be results based and focused on performance and accountability. This imperative of efficiency, transparency and accountability is also very much at the heart of the demands from Member States for United Nations reform, and forms a cornerstone of my own priorities for the Organization.

7. The present report provides an overview of how I view the Panel's recommendations in the context of the wider United Nations reform agenda and suggests elements of a process for consideration of ways to take forward intergovernmental consideration of the Panel's report.

II. Consideration of the Panel's recommendations

8. As noted by my predecessor, the Panel's report is very rich in terms of analysis and recommendations and covers a great deal of ground. As he suggested in his transmittal note, the report merits a process of review and dialogue to build broad-based common understanding of its objectives, contents and proposals. Although the main consideration of and decision-making regarding the report's recommendations should be done by the General Assembly, other policymakers and actors need to be brought into the discussion to build deeper understanding and ownership of the proposals. Those steps include consultations within the Economic and Social Council and with the governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system.

9. I believe that the proposals in the report should be pursued as an integrated and coherent whole, as the report was crafted as such with many of the recommendations connected to one another. Arrangements for its review should ensure that the different proposals in the report are addressed on their own merits, with outcomes that reinforce each other and advance, together, the overall objectives set by the Panel.

10. The report should be considered within the context of a number of ongoing reform processes. Clearly, the Panel, in formulating its recommendations, was mindful of the other processes and the progress and obstacles they have encountered. In that regard, many of its recommendations are consistent with existing mandates for reform. In those cases, the United Nations system should move ahead to improve coherence without unnecessary delays so as to avoid duplication of effort. Other areas will require fuller discussions and deliberations.

11. One such process, which is highly relevant in terms of the Panel's recommendations related to enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations at the country level, is the forthcoming triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. A number of the Panel's recommendations reaffirm and give renewed impetus to ongoing reform initiatives mandated by the 2001 and 2004 triennial comprehensive policy reviews, which constitute the policy framework agreed at the intergovernmental level for the operational activities of the United Nations system. The 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review provides an important opportunity to consider and take forward relevant recommendations of the Panel, including assessing progress with regard to the pilot "One Country Programmes" recommended by the Panel.

12. Following consultations and at the request of interested Member States, the United Nations Development Group has initiated eight pilots in which the "One United Nations" approach will be tested. The pilots are being undertaken on a voluntary basis under government leadership and will consist of a subset of about 20 joint offices that the Organization has committed to initiate under the triennial comprehensive policy review implementation plan approved by the Economic and Social Council. This exercise will provide an essential test of the application of the principles advocated by the Panel in different countries, and an analysis of the results and experiences will be presented to the relevant governing bodies at the end of the year. I have endorsed the present exercise and encouraged the Chair of the United Nations Development Group to proceed. A number of issues related to the development of the One United Nations approach will need to be considered, including the following: the central concept of national ownership; the authority and accountability of the United Nations Resident Coordinator; and the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as manager of the resident coordinator system on the one hand and in its programmatic role on the other. There should be clear delineations of responsibilities in the form of an internal "firewall" in UNDP. At the same time, the United Nations Development Programme's programmatic role should be supportive of the overall cohesion effort and be strategic and cross-cutting rather than sector or project focused. There also needs to be more clarity with regard to what would constitute an effective unified budgetary framework at the country level.

13. Similarly, there is an existing process dealing with United Nations reform issues in the area of the environment, namely the General Assembly informal consultative process on the institutional framework for the United Nations environmental activities. The Panel was cognizant of this process and interacted with it, emphasizing that its recommendations were complementary and intended to provide an impetus to deliberations in that forum. Consultations on the environment-related recommendations put forward by the Panel could thus be taken up by the Assembly's informal consultative process, as appropriate, taking into

consideration relevant discussions and decisions in other intergovernmental forums, including the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council, the Council of the Global Environment Facility and the conferences of the parties to relevant multilateral environmental agreements. I will be giving due attention, in the light of the intergovernmental process, to the Panel's recommendation that I commission an independent and authoritative assessment of the current United Nations system of international environmental governance.

14. Progress is already being made with regard to the Panel's recommendation that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) undertake a review of its functioning, in the light of experience gained since its establishment five years ago, with a view to improving its performance and accountability for system-wide coherence. At the session of the CEB held during the fourth quarter of 2006, executive heads unanimously welcomed the broad thrust of the Panel's recommendations and were united in their desire to improve coherence and coordination and enact the necessary system-wide reforms. The Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Juan Somavia, and the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy, have been entrusted with the task of leading the CEB review, seeking the full engagement of all executive heads. The intention is for the first session of the CEB, which I will chair, in April 2007, to consider a preliminary set of proposals for action to strengthen the effectiveness and relevance of that body as a responsive and transparent high-level mechanism under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, geared to advancing the overall coherence and impact of the United Nations system.

15. The Panel's recommendations are providing further impetus to reform measures on United Nations business practices, which are aimed at significantly enhancing performance and delivery of results. The recommendations are clearly very much in line with my priorities in such areas as transparency, accountability, efficiency and human resources development, including the promotion of staff mobility, and should be actively pursued in all relevant forums. Modernizing and achieving full compatibility on processes for resource planning, human resources, common services and evaluation are essential to turning the concepts of a more unified and coherent United Nations into reality. As much of the work falls within the purview of the CEB High Level Committee on Management, which encompasses representatives of all the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, a comprehensive progress report from CEB on its work in harmonizing business practices may be helpful to the General Assembly in facilitating its consideration of these matters.

16. Another area in which progress is already being made is with regard to certain recommendations in the humanitarian assistance section of the Panel's report. With respect to food security, advanced discussions among the Rome-based agencies of the United Nations system have already taken place, with a view to developing proposals for the consideration of relevant intergovernmental bodies. However, more needs to be done to further strengthen the Organization's role as a coordinator in terms of enhancing partnerships and its capacities to deal with the transition phase from relief to development. Moreover, more investment is urgently required in risk reduction and early warning, building on existing international initiatives to help mitigate or prevent natural disasters. The Panel makes good recommendations in those and other areas that should be further considered.

17. With regard to the Panel's recommendations to strengthen the Organization's gender architecture, I am in full agreement with the Panel's assessment of the need to consolidate and strengthen several current structures in a dynamic United Nations entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment, which should mobilize forces of change at the global level and inspire enhanced results at the country level. It is also essential to stress that gender equality will remain the mandate of all United Nations entities. I will also continue to recruit competent women to become part of my senior team.

18. With regard to the proposal on gender equality and women's empowerment, including the establishment of an Under-Secretary-General for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, who would lead a consolidated and strengthened United Nations gender architecture subject to approval by the relevant intergovernmental process, the United Nations system and many Member States are united in their conviction that the recommendations would contribute to overall efforts to achieve the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. However, I will await the outcome of the substantive discussions and consultations by Member States on the proposal in order to be guided further by the intergovernmental process. I hope that Member States will be able to reach a positive early agreement on this proposal so that we can take it forward.

19. With regard to the Panel's recommendations in the area of human rights, I am in full agreement with the Panel that human rights and other cross-cutting issues should be an integral part of United Nations activities. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the highest official of the United Nations responsible for human rights, should ensure the linkages between the normative work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and operational activities. It is of utmost importance to support the Human Rights Council to make it into a truly effective body that has the credibility and authority to take forward the Human Rights agenda of the United Nations.

20. One area of the Panel's report which merits in-depth intergovernmental consideration is that of governance. I urge Member States to give due consideration to the recommendations of the Panel in that regard. In the view of the Panel, their recommendations taken together would encompass a framework for a unified and coherent United Nations structure at the country level, matched by more coherent governance, funding and management arrangements at the centre as well as by consistency and coherence at the regional level. The report's recommendations in this area constitute an important starting point for a process that requires further deliberation and discussion to develop a commonly owned vision that should enhance the coherence and efficiency of the intergovernmental structure and reflect the principle of country ownership. The preceding set of issues includes consideration of the proposals made by the Panel relating to the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council as the authoritative forum to ensure more efficient implementation of our common development agenda; the establishment of a Sustainable Development Board as an inclusive strategic overview and governance framework for the implementation of the "One United Nations" approach at the country level; and ensuring support to the Sustainable Development Board, once it is created, through an inter-agency Development Policy and Operations Group, within the CEB framework. This Group could either replace the United Nations Development Group or be a subgroup of the United Nations Development Group

explicitly given the task of supporting the new Board. I believe that the aim should be greater coherence at the Headquarters level to support coherence in the field.

21. With that in mind, I concur with the Panel's conclusion that more detailed and specific proposals for further streamlining and consolidation would require a more in-depth technical analysis than was feasible in the time frame available to the Panel. I will thus be giving due consideration to the Panel's proposal that I establish an independent task force to further eliminate duplication within the United Nations system, and consolidate United Nations entities, where necessary, building on the foundations of the Panel's work.

22. I intend to work and consult closely with Member States, the President of the General Assembly and the relevant intergovernmental bodies, which will play a critical role in moving the report forward. In that regard, I have asked the Deputy Secretary-General to oversee and support implementation of the system-wide coherence reform agenda. The Deputy Secretary-General will work closely with relevant senior United Nations officials who will be at the disposal of Member States to facilitate discussion in their respective areas of responsibility. The United Nations system is conscious of the need to urgently take steps to enhance overall coherence and effectiveness, but is equally aware of the need to ensure that efforts to act on the Panel's recommendations are guided by and respectful of the intergovernmental consideration of the Panel's report.